CrossMark

Continuity and Change (2023), **38**, 31–52
doi:10.1017/S0268416023000085

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Performative openness and governmental secrecy in fourteenth century Valencia

Adam Franklin-Lyons*

Emerson College
*Corresponding author. Email: Adam_franklinlyons@emerson.edu

Abstract
In the fourteenth century, the urban council of Valencia tried to balance maintaining the secrecy of their government with a perceived need to publicise their actions. The council knew from experience that information vacuums could be dangerous. Feuds between noble groups made the urban council wary of the secret actions of council members. Food shortages and the anti-Jewish riots in 1391 also pressured the council to project a public face of action to quell urban unrest. In response, the city enacted a performative publicity: a public show of information dissemination concerning the normal operations of government that still occluded the actual discussions of the council.

1. Introduction

Over the course of the fourteenth century, the urban government of the city of Valencia developed and deployed new and often sophisticated methods for gathering, disseminating, and controlling information. Urban, royal, and mercantile administrations alike employed runners to convey letters and information to and from the seat of government to keep those in power better informed on many topics. Runners brought news of military action, peace treaties, political unrest, the price of commodities, and other timely information, which town criers could then proclaim to a broader population. New abilities to transmit information also came with new questions about the ability to control its spread. Governments often attempted to keep information secret from their economic and political competitors. While this competition encouraged governments to keep a great deal of their knowledge secret, there was also a consistent need to inform the public about everything from important state events to changes in laws and regulations.

The question of dissemination versus secrecy was never more pressing than during a crisis. Then, as now, major social crises heightened fears among the population and generated stronger demands for new information, but also created confusion and information fogs that allowed for false or dangerous rumors to spread. Famine, war, or political unrest generated the most pressing information (brought by the fastest runners). Sharing certain information could shape how people acted for better or worse. Well-timed news could encourage merchants to bring

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

needed supplies or better prepare cities for invasions, but a vacuum created room for fears or misinformation that could have negative consequences. Crises demand a messaging response as much as they demand real action, as they threaten to unravel governmental control, not just over events, but over the ability of the government to control the publicly projected narrative.[1] Public criers allowed for efficient transmission of information but also allowed both royal and urban ruling elites consistently to shape narratives and balance competing demands of secrecy and public dissemination.

The urban government in Valencia provides an excellent test case for understanding how urban governments, especially, engaged with information strategies during a crisis by publicising, spinning, or withholding knowledge about the events or public responses to it. The city employed one of the fastest, best organised system of couriers to run letters back and forth to representatives in distant locations. Like many urban centers across the western Mediterranean, Valencia employed professionalised town criers who routinely transmitted legal pronouncements, acts of the urban government, and other important information to as many people as possible.[2] The council could use not just their own criers, but hired criers in distant cities to communicate messages advantageous to Valencia. The Valencian leaders also routinely restricted the free dissemination of information by other criers, essentially attempting to create a monopoly over publicly available information. Despite the increasing ability to distribute information, the council still routinely kept most business secret, including virtually all deliberations and most decisions of the group of *jurats*, a smaller group who constituted an executive assembly within the deliberative council.

Instead, the government routinely practiced a performative openness by frequently announcing the barest results, only providing information that something *was* happening, rather than what, in fact, had happened. This performative openness created a systematic reliance on what Kim Lane Scheppele called a 'shallow' secret.[3] A 'shallow' secret is a piece of news or information that people are aware exists but are also aware of their inability to know that piece of information (as opposed to a deep secret, where they are unaware even of the presence of the information). The town crier announced virtually every council meeting, publicised changes to town regulations, and proclaimed important diplomatic arrivals, all without divulging any deliberative content of those actions. The consistent public announcements turned most functioning of the Valencian government into these sorts of 'shallow' secrets, which ultimately became part of the practice of government itself.

As Karma Lochrie has pointed out, often the methods of and reasons for medieval secrecy are more compelling than the actual secrets those methods obscured.[4] Notably, most of the council actions kept veiled as shallow secrets were not, in fact, that remarkable. The Valencian council routinely obscured some of the more mundane aspects of urban government, such as negotiations of loans, discussions of street construction and building permits, or donations to local religious houses. All those discussions remained secret, although they were hardly state secrets. The council's enduring preference for 'shallow' secrets likely stems from a general desire to project stability and bolster their legitimacy. The ruling elites of Valencia worried constantly about unknowns beyond their control and understood well the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

feeling of operating in an information vacuum. The council assumed that knowing about the existence of information despite the secrecy, was better than not knowing what information existed, a stance they seemed to take in their own dealings with the royal or other urban and noble administrations. Especially during crises, routine announcements often demonstrated that the council was responding to the problem but gave few hints as to the success of their response. More than simple platitudes, the public announcements also often spun events to shield the council from blame. During a crisis, the routine 'shallow' secrets of government became part of the attempt to maintain the veneer of legitimacy.[5] The use of 'shallow' secrets projected the stability of the town government, both by allowing for a public and ritualised demonstration of the endurance of urban institutions and by assuaging public fear caused by a genuine vacuum of information.

Additionally, these 'shallow' secrets were likely targeted as much at other members of the elite in Valencia as they were at the public, writ large. For much of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the city was periodically riven by factional violence between different *bandos* or urban gangs.[6] These divisions periodically broke into open violence in the streets, often instigated by young members of the knightly class, though the violence drew in other members of the Valencian elite, including patricians, merchants, artisans, and even the clergy.[7] During moments of political tension within members of the elite, the attempts to monopolise communication became as much a contest over the narrative as over the events themselves. Public announcements about governmental meetings projected consistency and normalcy without giving away the knowledge of the inner workings and decisions of the governing bodies themselves.

After providing some background on Valencian government in the fourteenth century, this study will describe the structures in place to disseminate information. These systems shaped the government's ability to create 'shallow' or deep secrets. The methods available to the city provide a useful backdrop against which to view the choices made by the city's leaders to deploy 'shallow' or deep secrets. The clear ability to publicise information when necessary meant that specific actions around secrecy were voluntary, rather than accidental. The 'shallow' secrets the performance of openness created also make the deep secrets kept by the council stand out in greater relief. Crises often prompted the council to hide certain intentions even from other governmental bodies, such as members of the royal administration or competing town governments. Three crises, food shortages (including the significant famines of 1374 and 1384), a series of political fights within the council itself that resulted in accusations of treason against some of the *jurats* themselves, and finally the deadly attack on the Jewish quarter in 1391 all highlight the council's ability to control and spin information, through both letters and public announcements. Public displays of a robust response encouraged a veneer of control and unity while secret wranglings attempted to transfer blame or gain a comparative advantage. The complexity of these crises encouraged different forms of responses to attempt to deal with different facets of the overall situation.

Finally, the Valencian city council is also an excellent test case for these methods of secrecy because of the richness of the urban archive. Valencia's records include a rare combination of detailed council minutes, thorough financial payment records, and registers of the letters sent by the government.[8] The letter collections,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

especially, are uncommon for the Iberian Peninsula.[9] Additionally, both the financial documents and the city council minutes are surprisingly loquacious, especially when compared to the terse payment records of cities with similarly complete record collections like Barcelona. These different forms of documents all contain different references to the practices of secrecy. Notably, financial documents, less often viewed by anyone, and not sent across the kingdom like letters, sometimes contained references to actions and decisions that do not even appear in the council minutes. Some of the practices described here, especially the normal workings of government, were regular occurrences and appear across dozens of years in multiple books. Responses to other events, food crises or political intrigue and violence, were unpredictable, but not uncommon. Valencia dealt with at least five food shortages of varying magnitude during the second half of the century. The anti-Jewish riots, while connected to other violence against Jews in the medieval period, are a singular event with many consequences (and much writing about them). While the letter collections are not contiguous, they do have important volumes available for both the anti-Jewish riots and the famine of 1374, allowing us to see clearly the contrasts between these different records in a way that helps illuminate the government's normal and crisis-driven practices of secrecy.

2. The context of the Valencian government

By the end of the fourteenth century, Valencia was one of the wealthiest and most powerful cities in the wider Crown of Aragon, competing economically with other cities across the Mediterranean. Valencia received its urban charter in 1261 from Jaume I, two decades after the Aragonese king conquered the city and surrounding kingdom from its Muslim ruler, Zayyān ibn Mardanīš.[10] The king distributed the conquered territory between various supporters of the campaign, but broadly speaking, Muslims often remained consolidated in rural areas under new feudal lords and Christian settlers flocked to a series of urban centers largely along the coast of the kingdom.[11] The charter given to the city of Valencia expanded on an earlier set of customs derived in large part from similar charters already in use in other cities around the kingdom, especially Lleida.[12] Most cities around the Crown of Aragon had a small executive group (called the *Jurats* in Valencia) who made most decisions for the city, often in consultation with a much larger council. The councils generally reserved seats for several representative groups within urban life – members of patriciate families, wealthy merchants, but also artisans including cloth workers, butchers, and other laborers.[13]

Unlike most urban charters, the Valencian government included members of the knightly and noble classes. In most northern towns, the nobility was excluded from most or all town offices, and particularly from membership in the representative council or the smaller executive body.[14] Initially, Valencia excluded their participation as well, but by the fourteenth century, the group of *jurats* included four members from wealthy mercantile or patriciate families and two members of the minor nobility; the representative council included six minor nobles and four citizens from each of the twelve parishes for a total of forty-eight. These members were drawn from a range of patriciate families, merchants, and artisans from each parish.[15] While these groups had to work ultimately under royal authority and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

alongside royal officials, notably the *batle* or bailiff and the *veguer*, another magistrate who could enforce royal law, they generally held sway over much of the day-to-day control of the urban space. The inclusion of minor nobles in the town government was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it unified the interests of many regional landowners with the wealthy elite of the city, concentrating economic power in the capital and contributing to the city's dominance in the region. On the other hand, and more importantly for our purposes here, it also meant that feuds between petty nobility plagued the city for much of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and struggles between factions routinely broke out into open violence.

Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno has argued that once the factional fighting became routine, nobles used violence as a means of influencing urban policy.[16] Noble groups not in power could threaten violence, especially around elections, to attempt to sway the outcome. The instability brought by open violence constantly threatened the legitimacy of the government, undermining the perceived orderly rule of law. This persistent threat helped encourage the routine use of 'shallow' secrets by those in power. Any faction in power had a vested interest in being able to govern without interference, encouraging private decision making. But too much secrecy might encourage greater revolt from those kept in the dark. Public announcements of meetings, planned actions, and ritualised declarations of intent projected an imagined stability both to the general citizens of the city at large, but also to potential opposing factions. The constant announcements of action mirror the royal restrictions on noble violence itself. According to the same charters granted to Valencia, noblemen could legally commit violence against other nobles, provided they declared publicly their intention before three witnesses and announced their enemies by name.[17] If they could not declare their violent intent before parties representing their enemies, they could declare the feud before a governmental representative who would use the public criers to publicise the information beyond the initial oath, the same criers used by the urban government to disseminate public information.[18] The violence itself could come in many forms, but the initiation essentially acted as the same sort of 'shallow' secret, where people knew violence might be imminent, but did not know the contents or outcome until after it happened. Because of such ritualised practices of publicising knowledge, the council and *jurats* of the city knew exactly who they were spreading or hiding information from as they made their day-to-day decisions.

3. Disseminating information

Over the course of the fourteenth century several governmental bodies in the Crown of Aragon streamlined their systems to gather and disseminate information. Valencia, in particular, became more adept at distributing information sometimes across large distances to numerous recipients and audiences. Following a model developed first by King Jaume III of Mallorca, Valencia was the first city government in the Crown to adopt a formal system of runners.[19] Starting in 1358, the city hired a permanent official to oversee a group of a dozen runners whose only job was to carry messages as quickly as possible between the city and their representatives at court or in other urban locations. These runners sped up information

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

transfer, but also increased the expectations around the receipt of timely information in the governing council itself. Documents from the late fourteenth century show a council constantly concerned about rumors, lack of information, or even the late arrival of expected news, concerns heightened by numerous crises. The council had an acute sense that they constantly needed more information to make better decisions, and often that information was literally just beyond the horizon.

As rumors of war, piracy, or other geo-political events arrived, the council often hesitated to respond without being able to verify the information. Rumors of pirates arrived most frequently (there are dozens of examples from the second half of the fourteenth century), and the council would send out a runner to confirm sightings, even at fairly long distances.[20] The city routinely shared confirmed pirate sightings with other councils in Barcelona and Mallorca, even starting secret negotiations to find a more permanent method of defense in May of 1388.[21] In September of 1389, the council sent armed ships to arrest a man named Jacme Feliu, who was accused of stealing grain shipments, which the council learned of through 'public knowledge' [*fama publica*].[22] In another case against the city's own ambassadors, the city decided to forgo written communication and relied only on the word of their messengers, explicitly because of the news and conflicting viewpoints arriving from court, 'in great diversity'.[23] The well-known attack on the Jewish quarter in 1391 amplified rumors of an invasion by North African armies from Granada, prompting the council to send letters to Murcia asking for verification; the rumor even included precise numbers – 7,000 horseman amassed at the border.[24] While the rumor proved false, the Muslim communities throughout Valencia feared the rumors would then cause riots to break out against them. In every one of these cases, the council bristled at rumor and uncertainty, seeking to verify the truth as often as possible. In such a situation, the overall practice of announcing actions without details turned unknown-unknowns into known-unknowns, which they found preferable.

Working hand-in-hand with the ability to send information faster across large distances, the city government also closely controlled the ability to disseminate information publicly among the population of the city itself. Like many governments both urban and royal across the Iberian Peninsula, the city had permanently hired criers who could announce messages throughout the city usually proclaimed by trumpets and drums. The town crier announced a variety of types of information throughout the city on a routine basis. Previous work has described how criers acted as symbols of authority. Criers carried the colors and wore the official clothing of the nobleman, king or government they worked for, and the ritualised announcements extended the otherwise restricted actions of governing elites into public soundscapes.[25] Castilian kings routinely used their criers to announce changes in royal policy, as well as public punishments to encourage compliance.[26] In Valencia, the criers also came accompanied (again, quite typically) by drums and trumpets – every payment to the town crier included extra wages for the musicians who accompanied him. Criers could even be paid to make announcements for people from outside the city. Royal authorities could request announcement by local criers; town governments could have their ambassadors in other cities make public announcements advantageous to their home city, presumably with the ascent of the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

local council or ruler. Valencia sometimes used this mechanism to announce changes in grain prices or changes to import and export restrictions for foreign merchants.[27]

Official criers announced numerous events and actions, but in terms of governmental function, far and away the most common were changes in regulations, including tax levels, market regulations like cleanliness or fixed prices, or even sumptuary laws restricting ostentatious clothing in public.[28] The ruling council had an obvious interest in individuals knowing the rules and constantly commented about people using ignorance of the laws as an excuse when caught. They state more than once that the announcement of regulations was so that people, 'cannot reasonably allege ignorance of them'.[29] In one announcement, the crier announced that tanned animal hides brought in from outside the city needed to be prepared according to the same regulations as those made in the city. While the particular law was unremarkable, the announcement clearly targeted outsiders who might have been in a position to claim ignorance. The council ended the recording of the announcement with the clear intention of publicity, stating, 'with the present public cry, the stated [rules] are generally announced so that they will be evident to all'.[30] The crier generally had to repeat the announcements at a series of public squares or in specific markets, often on more than one day. In other cities, criers repeated announcements in multiple languages or on multiple days to insure maximum transmission of their information.[31]

Beyond the routine pronouncements of urban regulations, the crier publicised an assortment of other types of information. Large gatherings for ceremonial events such as the entry into the city of members of the royal family appear routinely if infrequently. The council often demanded full public participation in large religious processions like Corpus Christi or public ceremonies praying for the end of war or famine, all of which required public announcements, but also (as in the case of famine processions) involved the public of the city in collective responses to crisis.[32] Other major news events such as treaties were also announced to the city as a whole. The treaty of Almanzán that ended the destructive War of the Two Pedros got announced within hours of a runner arriving in the city with the official news.[33] At the end of May 1388, they announced the election of a pair of representatives to oversee the city's rights, particularly as regards trade, after the signing of a new peace treaty between the king and the long-time leaders of the resistance against the Catalan invasion of Sardinia, the judges of Arborea (listed as the 'judge' and 'judgess' in the document).[34]

The criers thus announced significant news events mixed with the specific communications directed at the population of the city about the will and desire of the council. The wide distribution of information to the public became part and parcel of the council's work to improve their own access to and transmission of information. The improvement of these abilities highlights the extent to which the council consciously kept so many 'shallow' secrets. The council could have informed the public had they wanted to. The public announcements were performances of power as well as of secrecy. The performance also pushed an official line of information to counteract the very real presence of rumors. The inclusion of instruments, livery, and the trappings of government informed the hearers of the source of the information and the authority behind it (whether they approved of that authority or not).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

4. Keeping secrets

Despite their increasing ability to disseminate information, the Valencian council routinely restricted information access. In some sense, information restriction is unsurprising. What is more notable is not the desire for secrecy, but rather the council's routine use of 'shallow' secrets that created the illusion of public information. The show of publicising information often allowed people in the city to know that something was going on, while still concealing the content of decisions and especially the deliberation leading to action. Citizens surely understood that crucial parts of the decision-making process took place behind closed doors; this would have been obvious whenever the crier announced a council meeting in the morning and a set of new regulations in the evening. The performance of openness may have been a hedge against further demands for information – a method of maintaining the secrecy the council did have. Just as common as the announcements of new regulations were announcements meant to demonstrate action while simultaneously restricting access to the deliberation behind the action. This balance of openness and secrecy extended across multiple acts of the council, including their regular meetings, swearing in of new members, and voting, but became particularly acute during crises.

The performance began with the most basic action of the council: their routine meetings. The council met at the request of the *jurats* and, while there was no normal schedule, in practice there were meetings every couple of weeks. Every council began with a public announcement (with the usual trumpets and drums), as well as written announcements delivered to each councilor, all declaring the time and place of the meeting.[35] Public announcements after the meeting contained only those decisions that required public action such as new rules and regulations or upcoming public ceremonies. Hence, everyone in town knew or could easily know that a meeting was imminent but could not attend nor gain access to the decisions produced. They additionally restricted access to the relatively detailed records of the council. Once in April 1390, the silversmith March Resolles came to the council to request documents on a loan that the council had taken out from A. Rebaça. Rebaça had died and Cesolles had been named as his executor and needed to make an account of his possessions and debts, including those documented in the city archives. Ultimately, the council granted Cesolles access to a few documents, but only those very specifically about his case and which matched documents he already possessed. They granted that he had 'summarily provided correct and just reasons… demonstrating his legitimate right'.[36] However, they stated that he must only be shown a copy of a single document and not any actual record books, 'as they are private'.[37] Citizens outside the council knew the information existed and even how to request it, but access remained guarded.

The swearing in of new officers and members of the council mirrored the calling of the council, with a large public statement about the purpose and actions of the various officers without actually detailing the substance of any particular action. The rituals also incorporated religious ceremonies where urban leaders publicly pronounced their fairness, lack of malice, and intention to work for the public good. At the beginning of each year, the officers of the city (including justices, *jurats*, and other town officers) were to gather at the altar of the Cathedral and 'in the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

presence of the people of the city in large numbers'.[38] The officers then swore before God, Jesus, the cross, the evangelists, and the prophets that they would perform their offices in good faith and 'without artifice and without evil trickery'.[39] In the same breath they made explicit that, while the public could witness the creation of the council, anything that 'shall be said in the council shall be held in secret'.[40] The general swearing of the council to secrecy was not unique to Valencia. Both Barcelona and Lleida had similar requirements. Lleida was more open, banning both officers and the full council only when they felt the information was especially sensitive.[41] In contrast, the council of Barcelona kept a plaque nailed to the outside wall of the council building for all to see where they wrote the names of any councilor who had disclosed to 'outsiders' the contents of council discussions. Those individuals were banned for life from ever holding office in Barcelona because they had failed to 'uphold the council's secrets'.[42] There is no obvious punishment listed in the Valencian records, but the oaths of secrecy do suggest that some retribution might have been exacted from those who divulged too much.

One dramatic example from 1389 illustrates how the city expected public information to spread, and how public messages could have multiple intended audiences. In December, the city executed a group of Muslims from the Algerian city of Oran, accusing them of starting a riot in Oran the year before in which several Christian merchants were killed.[43] The five Muslims were captured by a man described as a pirate [*cossari*] and neighbor [*vehi*] of the city of Valencia. While the actual guilt of the five captured Muslims is impossible to ascertain, the council ordered one of the elected judges of the city to execute the five men as an 'example and terror for others'.[44] The execution took place in Valencia, meaning the public spectacle acted as a reminder to Christian merchants in Valencia that they could expect violent but legal retribution for crimes against them in foreign places. The city also expected that news of the executions could travel back to Oran itself, just as news of the original riots had arrived in Valencia, presumably via rumors first brought by merchant ships and later verified or expanded by other witnesses. It is unclear if the specifics of the Valencian pirate's capture of the men and their subsequent sale to the urban authorities were ever publicised. The act of execution and the charge that the Muslims had killed Christians might have been the only prominent detail many people could absorb of the council's actions. The public announcement, then, attempted to impart not just the facts of the execution, but also the council's own interpretation of events, working against the rumors and other sources of information available.

As these examples show, often the transmission of information made obvious to those who heard the announcements the existence of further, secret, information. The swearing in of councilors and the announcement of laws both made public the actions of the *jurats* or the council, while simultaneous hiding most or all their deliberations. Even events like public acts of punishment provided an official view of the facts about which rumors likely already existed. As José Manuel Nieto Soria pointed out, the Trastámaran kings in Castile used public announcements of executions so frequently as a method of projecting royal authority that it became shorthand for the condemned to be described as 'publicly announced' [*aprego-nado*].[45] Similar practices happened routinely during crises, when the public

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

announcement of partial information served as much to offer the official understanding of events as it did to protect decisions making processes from view.

5. Publicity, secrecy and performative openness during crises

Crises often rarified these core practices of information management, heightening the importance of public and secret actions, as well as the interpretation of significant events. War, food shortage, and political unrest all increased the demand for information. However, they also threatened stability and pressured the elites to keep bad news under wraps. Especially when hiding information became impossible, the public release of information quickly became more purely propaganda, attempting to spin a narrative, rather than hide it. This final section focuses on three different crises, all of which threatened the legitimacy of the Valencian ruling elite, each in different ways. First, food shortages, almost more than any other crisis, could undermine political legitimacy and required a visible response. The public character of famine responses encouraged a range of both public and secret communications. The secret discussions sometimes contradicted the public announcements, highlighting the performative nature of the information. Second, as noted above, Valencia experienced routine factional fighting. In a notable moment of political division in 1389 and 1390, the *jurats* accused the city's current representatives at the royal court of treason and demanded they return to Valencia for trial. The accusations and court case threatened governmental stability from within and the current ruling elites persistently attempted to keep the divisive debates as much out of the public eye as possible (with mixed success), while promulgating their own spin on events publicly when it became necessary. The final example presented here is one of the better known and studied crises of the fourteenth century: the anti-Jewish riots of 1391. During the riots, the council lost control of both stability in their city and the narrative. This crisis emphasises the ways the council attempted to warp the narrative after the fact, trying to reestablish the perception of their control after it had been lost, removing their ability to control what became public and what remained secret.

As noted, food shortages demanded consistent and public government action, and frequently concomitant publicising of that action. Public announcements of inventories, laws against hoarding, and new import incentives served to demonstrate to the public that the council took the crisis seriously, as failure to do so could and did induce riots.[46] A volatile grain market could quickly undermine governmental legitimacy.[47] In Valencia, shortages brought more frequent repetitions of market restrictions and regulations as fears about manipulation of weights or quality soared. Public announcements meant to demonstrate a robust response included taking public inventories of the grain available in the city, setting up official urban markets, and banning exports or offering merchants subsidies for imports.[48] Indeed, measures like import subsidies require widespread publicising to even function – if merchants did not hear of the offer, it would be useless. The city also held large-scale religious processions, often praying for better weather. These processions sometimes came with the explicit demand that all Christians in the city appear along the scheduled route, making these announcements perhaps the most public actions regarding shortages.[49]

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Despite the obvious publicity that famine response demanded, the *jurats* and the council kept their deliberations (along with the fears those might expose) secret. When ships from Sicily encountered contrary winds and were delayed for weeks during the shortage of 1372, the council acknowledged the problem and prepared to contact merchants from new locations. However, in the public announcement of grain regulations and market restrictions announced the same day, the crier said nothing of the delays.[50] Shortages often involved the council attempting to keep bad news hidden, at the very least to avoid panic. Other secrets the council kept were more about the strength of their negotiating position, rather than simply avoiding negative reactions from the population. During the food shortages in 1384, the council sent a secret messenger to the animal markets in Aragon (especially in the region around Teruel) to report back on the price of flocks. The council fought with the butchers, who claimed their high prices came from the increasing costs of animals at the source, and the council did not believe them.[51]

Valencia routinely sent this sort of representative to distant trading partners for secret negotiations. Some of these negotiations produced deep enough secrets that they only appear in payment records for the cost of messengers to carry secret information not even referenced in letters. Due to persistent grain shortages in the winter of 1391, the city sent a secret messenger to Seville in Castile to negotiate for grain exports.[52] They hired a messenger unaffiliated with the city's usual messenger service, both because he was personal friends with Sevillian merchants and council members and specifically to not arouse suspicion. Ironically, while the record of payment to the messenger does not say so, the arrangement was probably to circumvent Seville's own commercial restrictions, the same sort of restrictions Valencia routinely publicised and enforced in their own markets. The effort was clearly successful as several later payments noted the import subsidies paid to ship captains from Castile with Sevillian grain.[53] Often in such secret missions, the messenger was allowed to sign contracts on the spot, hoping to secure a competitive advantage over other urban markets.[54] Occasionally, negotiations produced even deeper secrets that appear as only hints in the records. In one payment record in 1375, the exchequer paid a 'secret person' for 'some services' as 'secretly promised'.[55] Though likely, considering the surrounding communications and payments, even the relationship of this payment to the famine raging at the time can only be a guess.

These examples demonstrate some of the routine divisions between public and secret information during a food shortage. But the council's own doubts about one of the most common shortage responses – legal restrictions on hoarding and forestalling – further illustrates the performative character of many of the public announcements. Miracle stories of shortages sometime describe the acts of evil people hoarding grain to sell at a higher price. These stores are inevitably discovered or seized, and the hoarders punished. Such beliefs meant that cities often enacted rules against hoarding and publicly announced quite draconian punishments for those caught with more than their fair share.[56] However, the Valencian council expressed explicit doubt that such regrating caused any serious problems. At the beginning of a significant shortage, in 1371, the council contemplated increasing the punishments on hoarders, but ultimately declined to do so because, 'the council doubts that, perchance, there might be very many of them'.[57] While they may have had

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

their doubts in private, this did not prevent the council from announcing rules against hoarding during future shortages. In 1385, during another significant shortage, the council made a full public announcement that all merchants had to sell all grain brought to market, not withholding any to improve future profits. Any merchant caught doing so would have all their grain confiscated.[58] Despite the very real doubts they expressed in secret, the council felt that the public message against hoarding or regrating still provided a sufficiently important veneer for a strong response, making these announcements feel more obviously performative.

The next two crises – the accusations of treason against members of the Valencia's own elite and the anti-Jewish riots of 1391 – overlapped in ways that shaped the secrecy of the council's response to both. After the charges of treason against Valencia's representatives in court, multiple groups around the kingdom of Valencia took sides with powerful religious leaders, as well as the elites of several towns, defending the men accused by the Valencian *jurats*. These same towns often disputed the version of events surrounding the anti-Jewish riots that the Valencian council attempted to promulgate, undermining their control of information. (Ultimately, the struggles brought in food supply questions as well, as these cities included Xátiva and Alzira, both cities that regularly fought Valencia's monopoly on grain exports from the kingdom – a fight that erupted again amid these new crises).[59] Both crises show the council and the *jurats* keeping a range of secrets. They used shallow secrets and public spin to try to defend their position in public, but also held deeper secrets in attempts to hide or spin information in their communications with other power brokers throughout the Crown, from the cities mentioned above, up to the king and members of the royal court.

In October 1388, the council in Valencia read out a letter from King Joan requesting representatives for a new meeting of the court to be held in Monzón. Valencia elected a group of five members of the council as ambassadors to the royal court to participate in deliberations and represent the city.[60] The five included two of the serving *jurats*, Pere Joan and *micer* Bonifaci Ferrer, along with three other citizens, Joan Suau Jr. ('*menor de dies*'), Berenguer de Rabinats, and Jaume Romeu (all men who had served on the council).[61] The five duly left for the court meeting, but within only a few months, their relationship with the *jurats* in Valencia soured. Nicholau de Valldaura stepped in to serve as an interim *jurat*, until a new group of five was chosen in June 1389. The council records are short on details for why the leaders chosen as court representatives would so quickly be accused of treason, but the initial disagreements revolved around the expulsion from court of the noblewoman Carroça de Vilaragut. The first group of Valencian representatives supported the condemnation of Carroça brought by members of the nobility. When the king complained to the Valencian council, the councilmen recalled the representatives, elected a new group in their place, and ultimately accused the supporters of Carroça of treason.[62] The council demanded their immediate imprisonment and the impounding of their goods and forwarded a court case against them to the royal governor of the kingdom of Valencia.[63]

The beginnings of the trial (like the riots, as we will see) highlight just how much these struggles were over the control of information. Early on, when the council first received word of the actions of the accused ambassadors, they expressed

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

concerns about the written word proving too dangerous because written information could spread beyond its intended audience. When a royal representative, Ramon de Soler, arrived with a letter in July 1389, the council deliberately 'did not agree to respond with a letter, [preferring] the live voice of ambassadors'.[64] The *jurats* hoped that the truth of the council's wishes would be presented to the court 'in this more secret manner'.[65] Written texts and the royal court were too leaky to communicate sensitive information.

Because the accused had, themselves, been high-ranking members of the council, the group of *jurats* prosecuting the case attempted to tamp down on virtually all rumor within the city, fearing it would create rifts in the social order. Two instances, both noted by Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno in his account of the events, demonstrate both the council's efforts and failures at maintaining secrecy.[66] In March 1390, a few months after the initial accusations, the council attempted to censure Çarovira (Sarrovira in Spanish) for speaking publicly in support of the accused and against the new *jurats*. The accused representatives had requested that the trial be moved to Alzira (presumably with the understanding that they had more supporters there and would get a fairer trial) and Çarovira was speaking in favor of the move.[67] The council opposed the move and hence attempted to silence Çarovira and others who supported the accused claiming that such 'negative words' were false and could, in any case, 'sow discord and sedition'.[68] Possibly in response to such tactics, supporters of the accused ambassadors resorted to more clandestine measures. In July, the council described how the supporters of the accused had posted notices at some of the city's intersections supporting the men.[69] The council responded by planning their own counter-information campaign, using the public crier to counteract the influence of the 'false' information spread by people in the city; the council could control the sonic public space, but written messages broke that control. The council lost the debate, as well, when the king ultimately granted the move.

It took years to resolve the case with further machinations, petitions, and debates. After years of fighting, the five accused were eventually exonerated by the next king, Martin I. Surprisingly, they were even restored as members of the council, with a couple of the men serving, again, as *jurats*. However, not long after the king granted the move of the trial to Alzira, the most serious riots against the Jewish population in Valencia broke out not just in the capital, but in multiple cities around the kingdom. The accusations against the representatives at court split the council and other members of the city, undermining the unified message of the council that usually veiled their shallow secrets. The news of the riots could not be contained, forcing the council and *jurats* to use public announcements to spin events rather than attempt to hide them.

The violence in Valencia was part of a wave of attacks on Jewish populations across the Iberian Peninsula. The first attack came on 6 June 1391 in Seville, resulting in the deaths of around four thousand Jewish residents of the city. Similar violence then spread to other cities and the attacks represent an important turning point in the life of the Jewish communities throughout the region. Forced conversions, often to avoid the very real threat of death, encouraged new levels of surveillance of both converts and their still-Jewish relatives and undermined some of the autonomy the community had previously enjoyed.[70] The city of Valencia

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

experienced the first attack within the Crown of Aragon on 9 July, only a month after the violence in Seville. A group of citizens stormed the Jewish quarter, killing dozens of people and looting numerous houses and businesses. The dramatic and violent events broke through any attempt at hiding the news and forced the council both to defend their control of the situation and to justify to the royal authorities their inability to prevent the initial outbreak. The response of the council provides an illuminating case study of the choices and controls on information. The council's inability to prevent the disaster precipitated a flurry of actions meant to prove the council's genuine intentions and reinforce their interpretation of events especially to the royal authorities.

However, the battle over information really began before the outbreak of violence. Two weeks before the riot, when she received the reports from Seville, the queen of Aragon wrote to the city warning them to protect the Jews.[71] On 27 June, King Joan I granted a request by the Jewish community of Valencia that they should receive the special protection of the city leaders; the Jewish leaders subsequently delivered the petition to the *jurats* themselves.[72] The following day, Queen Iolant sent her own letter ordering royal officials to take measures to prevent violence and scandal.[73] Notably, these orders resulted directly in competition over the control of public messages. Royal criers sent by Prince Martí (Joan's brother) announced that the Jewish community was under special royal protection, reinforcing the message of the king and queen. However, on 6 July, only days before the riot, the city convinced the royal authorities to cease their public announcements since it impinged on the city's privileges.[74] Similar to the use of leaflets by those defending the accused ambassadors, the presence of the royal crier threatened to undermine the urban monopoly of communication.

However, the presence of the royal announcements also strengthened the eventual feeling that the council failed in their duties. Because the council knew they should be prepared for exactly what happened, it meant that after the attack they needed to defend their failure. As Abigail Agresta has described, the council sent multiple descriptions of the events to the king. The first description is the most chaotic, but also lets some of the worst failings of the council show through, something the council tried to rub out of their subsequent versions.[75] They both claimed they had been more prepared and further accused a group vagabonds and strangers who had gathered to join a planned armada organised by Prince Martí (who himself sent a description that put effort into exonerating his own failings). Agresta also notes how the council attempted to pin blame on the Jews themselves for refusing to open the gates to the Jewish quarter when ordered by both the prince and the *jurats*.[76] For our purposes here, it is worth noting that this accusation fits in with the overall attempts to monopolise information described above – both resisting royal criers in the city and punishing people who spoke out publicly in support of the accused ambassadors. The *jurats* and the council resisted any intrusion on their ability to dominate the public narrative using their own criers and with their own message. The Jewish community refusing to open the doors created a vacuum in their ability not just to uphold order, but to demonstrate their narrative to all involved. This is especially ironic as it represents the council refusing the right of others to maintain their secrets, while constantly guarding their own and enforcing their right to do so.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As with the previous crises, the council continued their practice of publicising the actions of others while guarding their own usual secrets. In the aftermath of the riot and murders, the city continued announcing their search for perpetrators and their intent to severely punish people as a 'terror and example to those present'.[77] Additionally, the council elected a group of councils and notaries to set up guarded stations in all the parish churches to encourage the return of stolen goods from the Jewish houses and shops that had been ransacked. The notaries were to keep a public list and announce the return of any and all clothing or goods.[78] However, as with the exculpatory letters, the main audience for these actions was more likely the prince and, by extension, the king and queen. In the end, both the recovery of goods and the promised severe punishments did not fully materialise. Very few goods were returned, and King Joan eventually pressured his brother and deputy, Prince Martí, to find the perpetrators himself and punish them, ideally with public hangings.[79] The royal household also repeatedly asked the city to explain their actions and response and encouraged greater punishments for the perpetrators. The letters from the city to the king included numerous excuses and justifications, including miraculous occurrences, but the excuses did not convince the court that the *jurats* and council were doing everything in their power to prevent further violence.[80]

Notably, the resistance to the council's actions explicitly included resistance to their routine secrecy. The response to the attacks quickly intertwined with the accusations against the ambassadors described above. The same groups that supported the ambassadors against the current *jurats* of Valencia also actively undermined the Valencian efforts at shifting blame after the riots. As the Valencian leaders sought to exonerate themselves, men from the cities of Alzira and Morvedre wrote to the king offering a different version of events, even accusing the son of one of the Valencian *jurats*, Nicholas Valldaura, of participating in the assault.[81] Valencia, in turn, imprisoned Thomas Carbonell, and forced two other noblemen, Ferran Ximénez and en Rosell to flee because they had stirred up sedition, speaking 'vile and horrible and false speech' in public against the council.[82] These accusations of breaking the council's control over speech and messaging are not uncommon. However, they went on to claim that the men promised to the artisans of the city not only that they could take the current council's place, but that they could go through twenty years of financial documents to discover the faults of the current council (documents kept secret as demonstrated in the case of March Resolles' request for documents above).[83] The sedition included an explicit attack on the secrets of the government, and an understanding that those secrets the *jurats* were trying so desperately to control could undermine the overall message both about the accusations against the disgraced ambassadors as well as about the handling of the attack on the Jewish quarter.

6. Conclusion

The council and *jurats* of the city of Valencia had multiple methods of information transmission as well as the means to protect secrets at their disposal. In surveying the methods and the times when the council chose to publicise or obscure information, the council quite frequently stripped content from their

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

public announcements deemed too sensitive for the public. Most public cries contained only limited news about the workings of the council unless the decisions necessitated specific actions on the part of the population such as attendance at a procession or adherence to a new statute or law. The council guarded their monopoly over public information, though it was frequently challenged. As part of that monopoly, they feared a vacuum of information, often publicising partial stories to assuage the fear caused by a total vacuum. The public announcements of the council also helped buttress the council's interpretation of events and the perceived unity and authority of the council more broadly. Because the public announcements of so much of the council's work still maintained sufficient secrecy for most business, the members seemed to distrust genuine secrecy, preferring a performance of partial openness. They understood that for every spy or secret informer they hired, other rulers and councils had their spies doing similar work. The uncertainty created by silences and secrecy undermined their ability to make clear decisions. The council seems to have assumed that similar levels of routine secrecy would ultimately make their own governing more difficult, not least because such silences clearly created space for rumors of all kinds. There are unsubstantiated hints in the records of just these sorts of fears. Once, the council sent a messenger to the town of Montesa because they had heard a rumor of a secret plot against the leaders of the city. The runner, without even mentioning where the information came from, reported that the council need not worry: there was a secret plot, but it has nothing to do with Valencia.[84] Secret actions likely proliferated, and even some information was better than none.

Valencia's history with factionalism and public violence further fed an interest in the perceived unity of government that the public performance of open information could provide. The incorporation of nobility into the municipal council and their concentrated presence in the capital meant that the internecine violence that occurred between nobles often erupted within the city itself, rather than along the borders between seigniorial territories.[85] While the 1380s and 1390s were a period of uneasy truce between the various *bandos*, the factionalism of the capital broke into open violence again at the beginning of the fifteenth century, so the concern over some form of transparency was very real.[86] Indeed, as the council debated military assistance for the king in October of 1391, the noble branch of the city government sent their own separate representatives to the king to negotiate, angering the *jurats* and causing altercations between the other branches.[87] Ultimately, performances of openness, such as the oath-taking and public ceremonies of *jurats* taking office, predated much of the worst factionalism, so the violence may have encouraged such practices, but did not create them. Even if the internal fighting did not act as a primary driver, it did reinforce its use. Performances of openness also acted as performances of unity, however fragile.

Finally, crises, by definition, undermined the ordinary operations of government, threatened normal legitimacy, and strained the ability of the council to control their messaging and their secrets. As the crises detailed here demonstrate, messaging always had multiple audiences, depending on the source of pressure. During food shortages, the primary pressure came from the hungry population of the city itself, which did not directly threaten the monopoly of the council. Shortages precipitated numerous announcements and public actions aimed at

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

demonstrating a robust governmental response, including various market restrictions, export bans, and other grain market controls. The performative quality of those announcements appears most clearly in the private reservations and doubts over hoarding that contradict the clearer public messaging. The accusations against the ambassadors of the city more directly challenged the council's ability to control public messaging. Especially because the accused came from the ruling elite of the city themselves, their supporters constantly pushed back against the unified messaging of the council, first verbally in public, then more covertly through pamphlets and flyers. Finally, in the wake of the attack on the Jewish quarter, pressure came directly from the royal authorities to reestablish order and punish those responsible, while the leaders of neighboring towns and some citizens of Valencia itself (some still angry with the acting council over their treatment of the ambassadors) contradicted and undermined the *jurats* efforts at controlling the message and publicising their version of events. The council's actions played more directly to the audience of the royal representatives in the city, attempting both to convince them that the situation was under control and that the council and *jurats* were not the source of the failures of public order.

Throughout all these crises, the council constantly attempted to maintain control over the information environment. The performance created by the town crier offered not just a projection of elite power, but also its official view of events. The Valencian rulers used both the crier and regulations to monopolise the space of public information, pushing back or banning voices that contradicted their interpretation of events. Political crises, especially, undermined their ability to keep secrets, since their adversaries had their own secrets from having served on the council. The response to the written notices supporting the disgraced representatives shows how even after the appearance of a rumor, the council continued to use their means of publicity to try to influence the understanding of a story. Perhaps the most notable feature of the control the council attempted to exert is how strictly they kept their own secrets, even those of little consequence, while assuming the secrets kept by others were an obvious threat to the current rulers and potentially to the public good itself. Secrets, public information, and the ability to interpret public information constituted a key part of the overall control of the council over the city, as important as something like proper regulations of the grain market or the policing of the public order.

Notes

1 Arjen Boin, Paul 't Hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, *The politics of crisis management: public leadership under pressure*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2017), 78.

2 Didier Lett and Nicolas Offenstadt, 'Les pratiques du cri au Moyen Âge', in Dider Lett and Nicolas Offenstadt eds., *Haro! Noël! Oyé!: Practiques du cri au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2003), 9–12; Mercedes Gallent Marco and José María Bernardo Paniagua, 'Comunicación en tiempo de peste: "*Les Crides*" en la Valencia del XV', *Saitabi* **51–52** (2001/2002), 118–20; José Manuel Nieto Soria, 'El pregón real en la vida política de la Castilla Trastámara', *Edad Media* **13** (2012), 79–81.

3 Kim Lane Scheppele, *Legal secrets: equality and efficiency in the common law* (Chicago, 1988), 21–3; David Pozen more recently applied the concept of 'deep' and 'shallow' secrets to the workings of government and used the idea to create a taxonomy of secret keeping similar to what is argued in this article; see 'Deep Secrecy', *Stanford Law Review* **62**, 2 (2010), 265–75.

4 Karma Lochrie, *Covert operations: the medieval uses of secrecy* (Philadelphia, 1999), 3–4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

5 Scholars are increasingly studying these tactics in the modern world, especially with the disaggregation of information brought on by social media; for a recent example, see: Boin, Hart, Stern and Sundelius, *The politics of crisis management*, 80–8.

6 There are a number of excellent studies about the interactions between the *bandos* and the government of Valencia, several by one of the best known historians of the urban institutions of the city, Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno; see Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, 'La contestación a los próceres. Pugna de facciones y desórdenes en Valencia (1376–1478)', *Studia histórica. Historia medieval* **39**, 2 (2021), 175–201; Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, 'Vida pública y conflictividad urbana en los reinos hispánicos (siglos XIV–XV)', in *Las sociedades urbanas en la España medieval: XXIX Semana de Estudios medievales*, Estella, 15 a 19 de julio de 2002 (Pamplona, 2003), 541–89; Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, *Valencia, municipio medieval: poder político y luchas ciudadanas (1239–1418)* (Valencia, 1995), 139–67; for similar work on a town south of Valencia itself, see José Hinojosa Montalvo, 'Bandos y bandositats en la gobernación de Orihuela en la Baja Edad Media', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* **36**, 2 (2006), 713–50.

7 David Michael Gugel, *The social and cultural worlds of elite Valencian youth, 1300–1500* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, Center for Medieval Studies, 2016), 181–4, 204–5.

8 The three main series are contained in the Archivo Histórico Municipal de Valencia [Hereafter **AMV**]; *Manuals de Consell* series A; *Cartas Missivas* series G; and *Clavaria Comuna* series J.

9 For a description of the importance of the Valencian letter collections, see: Agustín Rubio Vela, *Epistolari de la València medieval* (Valencia, 2003), 23–9.

10 For an excellent description of the politics of the conquest, see: Thomas Barton, *Victory's shadow: conquest and governance in medieval Catalonia* (Ithaca, 2019), 261–5; on the promulgation of the initial charter of the city, called the *furs*, see: Mariano Peset Reig, 'Els Furs de València: Un texto de leyes del siglo XIII', in Francisco Javier Palao Gil and María Pilar Hernando Serra eds., *Los valencianos y el legado foral: historia, sociedad, derecho* (Valencia, 2018), 37–42.

11 Antoni Furió, 'La ciudad y el reino de Valencia en la Baja Edad Media: prosperidad material, esplendor cultural y debilidad política', in *Reino y ciudad: Valencia en su historia: del 18 de abril al 15 de julio de 2007* (Madrid, 2007), 90–2.

12 The original *costums* of Valencia borrow heavily from Lleida's *costums*, although in general there was significant overlap in the content of town charters from Barcelona, Zaragoza, Tarragona, and other urban centers; Pedro López Elum, *Los orígenes de los 'Furs de València' y de las Cortes en el siglo XIII* (Valencia, 2001), 109–20.

13 The size of the council varied, but was usually fairly large – 80 in Girona, 100 in Barcelona; Albert Reixach Sala, 'Mundo laboral, política municipal y trends económicos en las ciudades catalanes d la baja edad media: el ejemplo de Gerona (1340–1440)', in Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea and Arnaldo Sousa Melo eds., *Trabajar en la ciudad medieval Europea* (Logroño 2018), 352 and 366–8; Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, 'Orígenes sociales de los tres estamentos ciudadanos en Valencia medieval', *Estudis: Revista de historia moderna* **16** (1990), 20–1.

14 Most cities routinely kept the nobility out of the power structure of the city seeing major landowners as holding different interests than urban governments and working against especially mercantile interests. In Italy, large cities like Florence had complicated relationships with the nobility, who participated especially in earlier iterations of town government. These nobility were often later removed from town offices as artisans and merchants came to dominate urban governments; see Peter Sposato, 'Chivalry in late medieval Tuscany and Florence: current historiography and new perspectives', *History Compass* **16**, 7 (2018), https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/hic3.12458; John Najemy, *A history of Florence, 1200–1575* (Malden, 2006), 35–43. In the Crown of Aragon, both the nobility and the cities existed ostensibly under royal oversight, but at court noble and urban factions did frequently find themselves at loggerheads; cities especially in the regions of Aragon and Catalonia, kept the nobility at arm's length, legally excluding them from most functions of urban government; see: Josep Fernandez Trabal, 'De Prohoms a ciudadanos honrados: Aproximación al estudio de las elites urbanas de la sociedad catalana bajomedieval (s. XIV–XV)', *Revista d'historia medieval* **10** (1999), 334–5; Máximo Diago Hernando, 'La participación de la nobleza en el gobierno de las ciudades europeas bajomedievales: análisis comparativo', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* **37**, 2 (2007), 802–6; Narbona Vizcaíno, 'Orígenes sociales', 24–7.

15 These exact numbers varied in the thirteenth century, but the number of *jurats* stabilized in 1329 and the exact makeup of the council was codified in 1363; see: Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, 'Cultura política y comunidad urbana: Valencia siglos XIV–XV', *Edad Media: Revista de historia* **14** (2013), 177–9;

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Narbona Vizcaíno, 'Orígenes sociales', 24–6; Álvero Santamaría Arandez, *El Consell General de Valencia en el tránsito a la modernidad* (Valencia, 2000), 43–57.

16 Narbona Vizcaíno, *Valencia, municipio medieval*, 167–70; the city government routinely took steps to limit the violence and curb such influence, often with little effect. At the end of the fourteenth century they attempted to ban anyone involved in public feuds and the accompanying violence from participation in government, but quickly found that participation was so pervasive it became hard to find sufficient numbers of people without a role in the violence to even staff the town offices; Salvador Carreres Zacarés, *Notes per a la història dels bandos de Valencia* (Valencia, 1930), 141. Letters to the king also describe in detail the pervasiveness of involvement in the *bandos*; see Rubio Vela, *Epistolari*, letters 134–136, 271–82.

17 Emilia Salvador Esteban, 'Bandos y fórmulas de solaridad. La instrumentalización de las rivalidades de los poderosos por la Corona', in Salvador Claramunt Rodríguez ed., *El món urbá a la Corona d'Aragó del 1137 als decrets de Nova Planta*, XVII Congrés d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó (Barcelona, 2003), 21–2; Carlos López Rogríguez, 'Guerras privadas nobiliarias y paz pública en el reino de Valencia (1416–1458)', in María Isabel Loring Garía ed., *Historia social, pensamiento historiográfico y Edad Media: homenaje al Prof. Abilio Barbero de Aguilera* (Madrid, 1997), 643–67; Gugel, *The social and cultural worlds of elite Valencian youth*, 182.

18 Salvador Esteban, 'Bandos y fórmulas de solidaridad', 21–22; Remedios Ferrero Micó, '"Pau e treua" en Valencia', in *Estudios dedicados a Juan Peset Aleixandre* (Valencia, 1982), 1.

19 José Toledo Girau, *Los correos en el reino de Valencia* (Valencia, 1958), 11–4; Juan Martínez Ferrando, 'Los correos de la Curia Regia en la Corona de Aragón a Principios del Siglo XIV', *Analecta sacra tarraconensia: Revista de ciències historicoeclesiàstiques* **17** (1944), 105–7.

20 There are many examples, usually paying a runner or captain of a small coastal skiff called a *Llaüt* to take notices to the islands of Ibiza or Mallorca or to confirm sightings from the islands or other areas of the mainland; for a few such payments, see: AMV *Clavaria Comuna* J-21, f. 30r; J-24, f. 16v and 31r; J-25, f. 2r.

21 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 5v–6v; see also: AMV *Clavaria Comuna* J-24, f. 5v and J-25, f. 2v.

22 AMV *Clavaria Comuna* J-24, f. 12r.

23 'en grans diversitats'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 61v.

24 AMV *Cartas Missivas* G3-5, f. 25v.

25 Lett and Offenstadt, 'Les pratique du cri', 20–1; Thierry Dutour, 'L'élaboration, la publication et la diffusion de l'information à la fin du Moyen Âge (Bourgogne ducale et France royale)', in *Haro! Noël! Oyé!*, 150–1; Gallent Marco and Bernardo Paniagua, 'Comunicación en tiempo de peste', 123–8.

26 Nieto Soria, 'El pregón real', 81–4.

27 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-18, f. 34r–v or 113r; see also A-16, f. 44v, 73v–74r, or 186v–187r.

28 Marie Kelleher, 'Eating from a corrupt table: food regulations and civic health in Barcelona's "First Bad Year"', *eHumanista* **25** (2013), 59–62; Kelleher, *The measure of woman: law and female identity in the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia, 2011), 105–7.

29 'raonablement no puxa sobre aço ignorancia al·legar', AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 189r; see also: 196v or 233r.

30 'Ab la present publica crida notifica generalment les dites coses per ço que aquelles sien a cascuns mainfestes', AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 34v.

31 Lett and Offenstadt, 'Les pratiques du cri au Moyen Âge', 144–6.

32 For a few examples, see: AMV *Manual de Consell* A-16, f. 44r; A-18, f. 39v; A-19, f. 165r–v.

33 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-16, f. 262v; see also: Nieto Soria, 'El pregón real', 87–8.

34 'jutge e jutgessa d'arborea'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 7v.

35 These announcements appear every few pages in most of the council records with virtually identical language, stating that the council was called, 'with a public cry at the sound of the trumpet' [*ab crida publica a so de nafil*]. Similar descriptions start nearly at the beginning of the entire record series; the first noted instance seems to be in August 1341 when the council was called, 'with messages and a public cry' [*ab albarans i ab crida publica*]. There is no note prior to that meeting of a particular change in practice, only in the change in description, so it is impossible to know if they suddenly began calling every meeting in 1341 or simply began writing down that they did; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-4, f. 62r.

36 'facen rao i justici sumariament…mostrant son fet i son dret legitimament'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 126r.

37 'com sien privades…' AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 126r.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

38 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 1r; I have used the description at the beginning of the year 1389, which is a generally unremarkable year. The language from other years is generally nearly identical and appears repeated in numerous places throughout the documents.
39 'sens art e sens mal engeny'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 1v.
40 'seran dites en consell esser tenidores secretes'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 2v.
41 Esther Martí Sentañes, 'The power and control of information in municipal representation in the Catalan courts: the *Consell de Prohoms* of Lleida in the fifteenth century', *Parliaments, estates, and representation* **39**, 3 (2019), 298.
42 '…que los consoyllers manen tenir secret'; Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona, *Consell de Cent* 1B-7, 1322, f. 40r.
43 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 88r–v.
44 'exemple i terror d'altres'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 88v; The city had petitioned and received the royal right to punish Muslim pirates only days before, probably explicitly for this public act, see: Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, 'El trienio negro: Valencia, 1389–1391; Turbulencias coetáneas al asalto de la judería', *La España Medieval* **35** (2012), 187.
45 Nieto Soria, 'El pregón real', 92–3.
46 The most famous famine riot in the Crown of Aragon is undoubtably the Barcelona revolt in 1334, when a group of angry citizens, egged on by a charismatic preacher, took over the grain market, attacked the urban and royal officials, and eventually looted the homes of some of the council members; see: Carme Batlle I Gallart, *La crisis social y económica de Barcelona a mediados de siglo XV* (Barcelona, 1973), 47–50; Kelleher, 'Eating from a corrupt table', 58–60; Adam Franklin-Lyons and Marie Kelleher, 'Framing Mediterranean famine: food crisis in fourteenth-century Barcelona', *Speculum* **97**, 1 (January, 2022), 66–8.
47 George Dameron has described in detail how a reliable grain supply became one of the core markers of governmental legitimacy in the Italian city-states during the thirteenth century, 'Feeding the Medieval Italian city-state: grain, war, and political legitimacy in Tuscany, c. 1150–c. 1350', *Speculum* **92**, 4 (2017), 976–1019; see also: Antoni Riera i Melis, 'Crisis cerealistas, políticas públicas de aprovisionamiento, fiscalidad y seguridad alimentaria en las ciudades catalanes durante la baja edad media', in Luciano Palermo, Andrea Fara and Pere Benito eds., *Políticas contra el hambre y la carestía en la Europa medieval* (Lleida, 2018), 245–9.
48 For a general description of market control tactics, see: Adam Franklin-Lyons, *Shortage and famine in the late-medieval Crown of Aragon* (University Park, PA, 2022), 55–62.
49 For a couple examples of compulsory procession attendance, see AMV *Manual de Consell* A-16, f. 87r–v and 230v–231r.
50 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-16, f. 89v–91r; the discussion of the Sicilian ships is followed immediately in the text by the statements of the public crier.
51 AMV *Clavaria Comuna* J-20, f. 14v.
52 AMV *Clavaria Comuna* J-25, f. 23v.
53 AMV *Clavaria Comuna* J-25, f. 32v, 33v, and 44r. Valencia often negotiated with Seville in secret due to political tension between the kings of Castile and Aragon; see Franklin-Lyons, *Shortage and famine*, 152–3.
54 Antoni Furió, 'Disettes et famines en temps de croissance: une révision de la crise de 1300 - Le Royaume de Valence dans la première moitié du XIVe siècle', in Monique Bourin and François Menant eds., *Les Disettes dans la conjoncture de 1300 en Méditerranée occidentale* (Rome, 2011), 399–406; Antoni Riera i Melis, 'Crisis cerealistas, políticas públicas', 262–8; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-, f. 239r–v; AMV *Cartas Missivas* G3-3, f. 1r and 6r.
55 'persona secreta', 'alcuns serviis', and 'secretament promesa'; AMV *Clavaria Comuna* J-14, 52v.
56 During the famine of 1374, the Pope in Avignon memorably ordered his Vicar in Italy to root out any hoarding, saying that hoarders 'can rightly be called murderers of the poor' [*qui recte dici possunt pauperum homocide*]; see Jean Glénisson, 'Une administration médiévale aux prises avec la disette: La question des blés dans les provinces italiennes de l'Etat pontifical en 1374–1375', *Le Moyen Âge*, 4th series, **5–6** (1951), 313–4.
57 'lo dit honrat consell duptan que perventura no sien bastants', AMV *Manual de Consell* A-16, f. 47r.
58 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-18, f. 86v.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

59 Agustín Rubio Vela, 'Valencia y el control de la producción cerealista del reino en la baja Edad Media: orígenes y planteamiento de un conflicto', in *Demografía y sociedad en la España bajomedieval: Aragón en la Edad Media, sesiones de trabajo* (Zaragoza, 2001), 57–60.
60 Emissaries came from the three branches of the court – noble, ecclesiastical, and urban – and generally voted, participated, debated, and attempted to influence royal policy through their workings at court, see Germán Navarro Espinach, 'La jerarquía política de un sistema urbano: el brazo de las universidades en las cortes medievales de Aragón', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* **48**, 1 (2018), 118–21; Germán Navarro Espinach, 'Las cortes del reino de Aragón en la Edad Media (1283–1516)', *e-Humanista: Journal of Iberian Studies* **7** (2015), 231–44; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 17r.
61 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, 21r–22r.
62 The list of charges included numerous other acts, including asking the king to allow an expansion of the Jewish quarter; for a thorough description of the background and political fights around the accusations, see: Narbona Vizcaíno, 'El trienio negro', 186–90.
63 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 68r–v, 69v–70r and 74v–75r.
64 'no si covenia resposta per letra mas a viva veu per missatgers'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 61v.
65 'en aquella pus secreta manera'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 61v.
66 Narbona Vizcaíno, 'El trienio negro', 189.
67 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 190r–v and 180v–181v.
68 'les dites peraules detractories no esser veres i que aquelles o semblants porien engenrar discordies i seditions'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 118v.
69 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 155v.
70 The riots themselves have been well researched, especially looking at the consequences for the Jewish communities throughout the Iberian Peninsula. On the origins of the riots in Seville, see Maya Soifer-Irish, 'Towards 1391: the anti-Jewish preaching of Ferrán Martínez in Seville', in Cordelia Hess and Jonathan Adams eds., *The medieval roots of antisemitism: continuities and discontinuities from the middle ages to the present day* (London, 2018), 306–19; on the riots in the Crown of Aragon more generally, see Benjamin Gampel, *Anti-Jewish riots in the Crown of Aragon and the royal response, 1391–1392* (Cambridge, 2016); and for a couple of articles more specifically about Valencia, see Narbona Vizcaíno, 'El trienio negro', 177–210; and Abigail Agresta, '"Unfortunate Jews" and urban ugliness: crafting a narrative of the 1391 assault on the *jueria* of Valencia', *Journal of Medieval History* **43**, 3 (2017), 320–41.
71 Agresta, '"Unfortunate Jews"', 320–1.
72 Notably, this exchange appears in the royal archives, but not in the city's own meeting records; see Gampel, *Anti-Jewish riots*, 24.
73 Gamepl, *Anti-Jewish riots*, 287.
74 David Nirenberg, *Neighboring faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the middle ages and today* (Chicago, 2014), 78.
75 Agresta, '"Unfortunate Jews"', 327–8.
76 Agresta's Reading, which is both compelling and insightful, describes how this mirrors claims of Jewish blindness and unwillingness to see the truth of their own (Christian) salvation; Agresta, '"Unfortunate Jews"', 330.
77 'terror i exemple dels presents'; AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 243v.
78 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 244r–v.
79 Gampel, *Anti-Jewish riots*, 328.
80 Gampel, *Anti-Jewish riots*, 45–49; Agresta, '"Unfortunate Jews"', 329–30.
81 Narbona Vizcaíno, 'El trienio negro', 182–3.
82 'Vil e orreu e fals parlar', AMV *Cartas Missivas* G3-5, f. 44v.
83 Narbona Viczaíno, 'El trienio negro', 183.
84 AMV *Clavaria Comuna* J-25, f. 20v.
85 Rafael Narbona Vizcaíno, 'Violencias feudales en la ciudad de Valencial', *Revista d'Història Medieval* **1** (1990), 70–1; other cities with significant noble involvement in urban government, especially in Castile, also suffered similar disruptions and violence because of the persistence of noble feuds; see Máximo Diago Hernando, 'La incidencia de los conflictos banderizos en la vida política de las ciudades castellanas a fines de la Edad Media: el caso de Cuenca', *Hispania. Revista española de Historia* **69**, 233 (2009), 684–5; Santiago Ponsoda López de Atalaya and Juan Leonardo Soler Milla, 'Violencia nobiliaria en el sur del Reino de Valencia a finales de la Edad Media', *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval* **16** (2009–2010), 339–45.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press

86 Carlos López Rodríguez, *Nobleza y poder político: el reino de Valencia (1415–1446)* (Valencia, 2005), 249ff.
87 AMV *Manual de Consell* A-19, f. 266r.

French Abstract

Au XIVe siècle, le Conseil de Ville de Valence essaya d'équilibrer la nécessité de maintenir le secret de son gouvernement avec le besoin perçu localement de rendre publiques ses activités. Au Conseil de Ville on savait, par expérience, que l'absence totale d'information pouvait être dangereuse. Nombre de querelles entre groupes nobles avaient rendu ce Conseil méfiant des possibles actions secrètes de ses membres. À la suite de pénuries alimentaires comme des émeutes anti-juives de 1391, le Conseil de Ville entreprit d'organiser des annonces publiques afin d'étouffer les troubles urbains. La ville choisit donc, en réponse, de mettre sur pied des opérations de communication sous la forme d'avis à la population, avec diffusion d'informations sur les opérations normales du gouvernement, les débats propres au Conseil restant verrouillés par le secret.

German Abstract

Im 14. Jahrhundert versuchte der Stadtrat von Valencia, die erforderliche Geheimhaltung der Regierungsgeschäfte mit der als notwendig empfundenen Publizität seiner Maßnahmen in Einklang zu bringen. Der Rat wusste aus eigener Erfahrung, dass ein Informationsvakuum gefährlich sein konnte. Fehden zwischen Adelsgruppen ließen den Rat misstrauisch gegen Geheimaktionen einzelner Ratsmitglieder werden. Auch Nahrungsmittelverknappungen und anti-jüdische Ausschreitungen im Jahre 1391 setzten den Rat unter Druck, ein öffentliches Aktionsgebaren in Angriff zu nehmen, um städtischen Unruhen vorzubeugen. Die Stadt reagierte darauf mit der Inszenierung performativer Publizität: die Verbreitung von Informationen über normale Regierungsvorgänge wurde öffentlich zelebriert, dabei aber der tatsächliche Diskussionsverlauf im Rat verdeckt gehalten.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0268416023000085 Published online by Cambridge University Press